

Directions for the Collection and Submission of Animal Heads for Rabies Examination

Michigan Department of Community Health

IMPORTANT: If the specimen container is received leaking, not properly labeled, test requisition not completed or specimen label does not match test requisition, the specimen will not be tested!

When you receive this Unit - place the refrigerant provided in a freezer until ready to ship specimens.

1. Do not ship whole animals. Samples submitted to the laboratory may be a complete carcass (bats only), and intact head, or dissected brain tissue. Dissected brain tissue must include a complete cross section of the brain stem and either cerebellum or hippocampus.
2. Animals should not be euthanized any way that causes damage to the head. The use of strychnine or other chemical poison should be avoided. A fresh, unfixed brain sample is critical to a rapid and accurate diagnosis of rabies.
3. If a specimen, such as a horse or cow head is too large for the one gallon plastic bucket provided, two alternatives may be considered; 1) a veterinarian may remove the brain (do not use any preservative on the brain tissue) or 2) a larger container and bag may be used (3.5 gallon plastic bucket and larger bags are available from MDCH by special request). **Note: the 3.5 gallon buckets must not be mailed. They must be delivered by private courier or Federal Express.**
4. Remove the head/brain of animal and place in the plastic bag provided. Securely seal the plastic bag so that it will not leak. If using the larger bucket & bag, seal by twisting the bag and tying a knot to prevent leakage. **Note: Specimens must be kept refrigerated until ready to ship. Do not freeze!** Freezing will not compromise the test, but will delay results.
5. Place plastic bag (primary receptacle) containing the specimen into the plastic bucket (secondary container).
6. Place absorbent material provided (small white squares of material) into the plastic bucket.
7. The lids on the plastic buckets are designed to "lock" in place with moderate pressure. Check the lid to see that it is properly sealed and secure with tape before proceeding.
8. **Complete** the test requisition. Enclose test requisition in the plastic bag provided. Secure this bag to the **outside** of the bucket with tape or rubber bands. Place the bucket in the corrugated carton along with the refrigerant provided and pad the bucket with additional crushed newspaper or other suitable material to keep the container from shifting during shipment – if necessary.
9. **Complete** and apply the return address, diagnostic specimen label to the corrugated shipping carton. **Do not use any other label to designate this material other than those provided.** Ship specimen to the laboratory by the fastest means, i.e., U.S. Express mail, private courier or FedEx as noted above in 3. Specimen transit time to the laboratory should be as short as possible, preferably within 48 hours.
10. MDCH on-call supervisor at 517-335-9030 **must** preauthorize requests for rabies diagnosis on weekends or holidays.

The shipper is responsible for being sure that their package is in compliance with the current shipping regulations.